

Asset #10: Youth person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

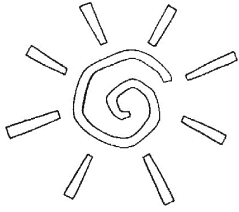
THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY

Feeling safe at home, at school, and in the community is necessary for young people's health and wellbeing. There are multiple elements of safety for young people, all of which are important to help children thrive. These elements include safety from accidents and hazards, safety from crime and violence, and safety from bullying and harassment, just to name a few. For young people, feeling unsafe often results physical, emotional, and social consequences. Youth who feel unsafe skip school more often, achieve less academically, have fewer friends, and are more likely to bring weapons to school.

To help raise awareness of the importance of safety to youth's psychological as well as physical wellbeing, the following discussion topics can help young people identify the ways and locations where they do, and do not, feel safe, and promote conversations about how to improve safety for themselves and others.

- Has anything happened at school, in the neighborhood, at the mall, or anywhere else to make you feel unsafe, afraid, or worried?
- Do you know what to do in case of an earthquake? Fire? Serious injury or illness?
- If you or a friend were being bullied, what would you do?

While safety is a critical concern, it's also important that adults help young people understand that small risks are normal. Sometimes overstressing safety can lead children to avoid healthy risks that help them grow. Helping young people learn to manage their own safety and react in case of emergency will help them develop confidence and independence that will serve them well throughout their lives.



ACTIVITIES

FOR FAMILIES

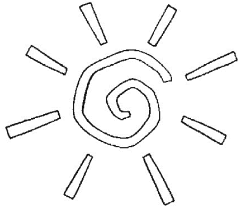
- Does everyone understand the rules about answering the phone, opening the door to strangers, spending time at home alone? Work together on rules that everyone can agree upon and follow.
- Does everyone understand where to go and what to do in a fire or other emergency? Practice fire and earthquake drills so that children can easily recall the instructions during the stress and confusion of an actual event. Together, identify at least three neighbors to whom your children can go in case of an emergency at home.
- Hold honest, open, and age-appropriate discussions with your children about personal safety, avoiding dangerous situations, and what to do if they feel threatened.
- Talk to your children about bullying, including what to do if they or their peers are being bullied. Bullying is a form of intimidation, and directly impacts young people's sense of personal safety and comfort.

FOR ALL ADULTS

- Make your home a safe place for all children in the neighborhood to go if they're threatened, hurt, or lost.
- Create or serve on a neighborhood watch group for your community.
- Be an "askable adult" who youth can go to when they have questions or concerns about their safety.
- Model safe behaviors! Wear a helmet when you ride a bicycle and fasten your seatbelt in the car.
- Pay attention to what's going on with the youth around you, and intervene if it seems that someone is being threatened, harassed, or bullied, or if youth are engaging in unsafe behaviors.

AT SCHOOL OR IN YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Take a safety walk! Canvass the area with youth to identify places where people might get hurt or threatened, and discuss where the young people do and don't feel safe at the site. Brainstorm ways to address the issues, and work with the administration or facility staff to solve the problems.



- Involve parents and caretakers in safety discussions to ensure message consistency and reinforcement
- Create and communicate clearly defined rules for physical behaviors as well as interpersonal behaviors. It's important that youth know that bullying is not acceptable. Discuss and role-play ways that youth can stand up for themselves and their peers if they're being bullied. Make sure that youth understand the importance of reporting bullying incidents and the difference between reporting and "telling."

OTHER RESOURCES

- Take 25 (<http://www.take25.org>) is a program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children encouraging parents to take 25 minutes to discuss safety issues with their children. Their list of conversation starters at http://www.take25.org/res/pdf/Take_25_Conversation_Starters.pdf covers online and offline personal safety topics for young children, tweens, and teenagers.
- Electronic bullying online or through mobile phones, known as "cyber bullying," is a growing phenomenon, especially with the relative anonymity for bullies. A good resource to help youth understand the issues is <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org>. For adults, <http://www.cyberbullying.us> serves as a clearinghouse for the latest research and information about cyber bullying.
- For K-12 schools, Project Cornerstone offers the Expect Respect peer abuse and bullying prevention workshop. With the guidance of a skilled facilitator, teams of diverse students develop leadership skills and action plans to promote healthy behaviors and reduce bullying on campus. Contact Project Cornerstone at (408) 351-6482 or info@projectcornerstone.org for more information.

**This article was provided courtesy of Project Cornerstone.
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